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ABSTRACT

In individual interviews, 145 students were exposed to a portfolio of 13 control advertisements and to one test advertisement which had three versions: the complete advertisement, the advertisement minus the headline and "subhead," and the advertisement minus the small photo and caption. Using the Kassarjian Inner-other Directedness Test and David Reisman's typology guidelines, "other-directed" individuals were distinguished from "inner-directed" persons by their lack of confidence and extreme desire for approval. Following this test, subjects were confronted with the complete version of the test advertisement and were asked if they recalled observing the previously missing element along with other parts of the advertising copy. Resulting data confirmed Reisman's typology and indicated that usually only the other-directed subjects would claim to have read parts of an advertisment that they had not been exposed to. (EE)

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The Relationship of Social Character to Levels of Inaccurate Response

by

Harvey R. Johnson
General Electric Company

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This study examined the relationship of David Riesman's social character typologies of inner- and other-directedness to levels of inaccurate response in an advertisement recognition test. The assertion was that other-directed subjects would say that they had read parts of an ad that they actually had not been exposed to, to a significantly greater extent than the inner-directed subjects. This assertion was based on Riesman's descriptions of these typologies in The Lonely Crowd.

One hundred forty-five students were exposed in individual interviews to a portfolio of 14 advertisements. One of these ads, featuring an automobile, was missing certain elements - headline in one case, photo in another, small photos in a third. Following this exposure, the Kassarjian Inner-other Directedness Test was administered. Upon completion of this test, the subject was confronted with the test ad which was identical to the ad previously included in the portfolio except that now it included the previously missing element (headline, photo, or small photos). The student was then asked if he remembered looking at or reading this previously missing element along with other parts of the ad. Recognition of this element was counted as inaccurate response.

A statistical analysis of the data showed that other-directedness is significantly related to inaccurate response. In many cases the relationship was very strong. When the sample was divided into tertiles - highly other, a middle group, highly inner - the inaccurate response level of the highly other directed group dropped to 14% yielding a chi-square at the .001 level of confidence. It was concluded that inner-other directedness and especially high inner-other directedness is related at a high level of confidence with inaccurate response rates. The study also indicated that ad recognition tests of this nature are essentially unreliable as factual reports of past behavior.

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From a master's thesis in journalism completed at the University of Florida in August, 1972, under the direction of Dr. Leonard J. Hooper.

Introduction

This study was prompted by a project done by Marder and David in 1961 to investigate the level of inaccurate response in an advertisement recognition test.[1] Marder and David found high levels of inaccurate response in advertising portfolio tests. Using a portfolio of 14 advertisements, they experimented wit a test ad which was missing certain elements. A complete test ad was shown to subjects after exposure to the portfolio containing the test ad. Erroneous recognition of test ad elements was then counted as inaccurate response. This study used similar tools except this time all respondents completed a test for inner-other directedness and their scores on this test were compared with their levels of inaccurate response.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship of social character, as defined by Waltraud Kassarjian's Inner-Other Directedness Test, to levels of inaccurate response in an advertising recognition test. The advertising recognition test in this case was a portfolio of 14 advertisements, one of which was an experimental ad. Specifically, the purpose of this study was:

to determine whether the character typologies of inner-and other-directedness can be related to a statistically significant degree with inaccurate response rates obtained in an aided-recall test of the individual elements of an advertisement (illustration, headline, body type, etc.) conducted through the use of a portfolio.

Hypothesis

David Riesman in The Lonely Crowd described his social character typologies of inner-and other-directedness. A third typology, tradition-directed, has been excluded on the basis of Riesman's assertion that this group is practically nonexistent in the U.S.

Riesman's inner-directed individual is supposed to possess a sort of gyroscope of internalized standards. He is guided by a personal code which allows him a certain freedom to fail in the eyes of others without being convinced of his own inadequacy. He listens to signals from within rather than from without.

The other-directed person, on the other hand, shows an exceptional sensitivity to the actions and wishes of others. Riesman says, "What is common to other-directed people is that their contemporaries are the source of direction for the individual...the goals toward which the other-directed person strives shift with that direction. His behavior is guided by the desire to please and resemble those with whom he interacts."

On the basis of these descriptions, this hypothesis was made:
Other-directed (and highly other-directed) respondents will inaccurately respond to a significantly greater degree than inner-directed (and highly inner-directed) respondents in an aided-recall test of advertising elements conducted through the use of a portfolio.

Methodology

The portfolio used in this study contained 13 control ads and one test ad which had three versions.

The 13 control ads were chosen from national magazines, clipped and placed in acetate covers in a three-ring binder.

The test ad was constructed at a Gainesville, Florida, advertising agency. The featured product was a BMW automobile. Photos for the ad were obtained from a local dealership and the ad was constructed completely from scratch. Three versions were created: Group I - the complete ad, Group II - the ad minus the headline and subhead, and Group III - the ad minus two "cartoon blocks" and captions.

A Group II or III ad made up the final ad in the portfolio.

All 14 ads were black and white, 8 1/2 X 11 inches.

All ads featured different products.

After considering the possibility that the test ad versions might be readily differentiated from the control ads, a test was conducted of the portfolio itself. Twelve University of Florida journalism professors were told to "look through the portfolio of ads just as they would through a magazine." The professors, in individual interviews, were repeatedly allowed to thumb through the portfolio while being given more and more information to help them identify the test ad. Only one professor was able to recognize the test ad after his third viewing of the portfolio. In fact, several of the control ads were named as the test ad more often than the test ad itself. It was concluded that the test ad in any of its versions could not readily be differentiated from the control ads.

The instrument used to measure Riesman's concept of social character in this study was the Kassarjian Inner-Other Directedness Test. Composed of 36 forced-choice questions, each particular question is scored on a five-point scale, +2 for a highly inner-directed answer and -2 for a highly other-directed answer. Typical questions from the test are:

1. I respect the person most who:
   a. is considerate of others and concerned that they think well of him;
   b. lives up to his ideals and principles.
2. In my free time:
   a. I'd like to read an interesting book at home;
   b. I'd rather be with a group of my friends.

For the sake of convenience, 72 points were added to each final score so that the scale ran from 0 (maximum other-directedness) to 144 (maximum inner-directedness).

The Kassarjian I-O Test was originally derived from Riesman's descriptions of situations which would differentiate inner-and other-directed persons. The tests has proven itself to be a valid measurement device.[2]

Pretesting of the portfolio and the I-O Test showed that these two tools could be administered in one session.

After a brief introduction, the obtaining of some demographic variables (sex, college major, college level) and an explanation of how to answer the I-O questions, the first 12 questions of the I-O test were administered verbally by the interviewer. The respondent was then given the portfolio and asked to look through the folder with these instructions:

"Now I'd like you to look through this folder of ads just as you would look through a magazine. If you come across any ads that interest you, read them carefully. You may take as much time as you want."

When the respondent was finished with the portfolio it was retrieved by the interviewer. Then the next 12 I-O questions were asked. Following this the respondent was confronted with the complete Group I ad, slightly reduced in size. Element by element he was asked if he had "looked at or read" that particular element. For respondents having seen the Group II ad in the portfolio, claims of having seen or read a headline or subhead were counted as inaccurate response. For those having seen the Group III ad, claims of having seen cartoon blocks or captions were counted as inaccurate response. With each subsequent interview the starting place on the ad was changed.

One hundred forty-five students were interviewed using this procedure over a two-week period. These students were selected purely on a convenience basis with no call-back procedure in operation. All interviews were conducted by either the author or his wife in the respondent's apartment or home.

The test ad position in the portfolio was moved with each subsequent interview to control for a series effect.

Average interview time was 14 minutes. Eighty-nine of the respondents were exposed to the Group II ad and 56 to the Group III ad. Originally it was intended that the split would be half and half. Once the actual interviewing began, however, it became apparent that the smaller elements of the ad were not receiving as high a level of inaccurate response as anticipated. Emphasis was therefore changed to the Group II ad where levels of inaccurate response were much higher.

Only three refusals were encountered in the interviewing.

Results

Having broken the I-O social character scores into two main groups, other-directed 0-71, and inner-directed, 73-144, the scores were again divided into tertiles: highly other-directed 0-59; a middle group 60-88; and a third group, highly inner-directed 89-144.

A mean score of 73.7 was obtained with a standard deviation of 15.6. The theoretical mean for the test is 72.3.

Group II Ad
(no headline or subhead)

	% of inaccurate response among	
	other-directed	inner-directed
Headline Line 1	66	35
Headline Line 2	64	30
Subhead	34	15

Group III Ad
(no cartoon blocks or captions

	% of inaccurate response among	
	other-directed	inner-directed
Cartoon 1	36	19
Caption 1	14	6
Cartoon 2	41	19
Caption 2	13	8

Group II Ad
(no headline or subhead)

	% of inaccurate response among		
	high other-directed	middle	high inner-directed
Headline Line 1	81	48	21
Headline Line 2	83	44	14
Subhead	22	26	21

Group III Ad
(no headline or subhead)

	% of inaccurate response among		
	high other-directed	middle	high inner-directed
Cartoon 1	50	21	18
Caption 1	30	2	9
Cartoon 2	60	21	18
Caption 2	30	2	18

A quick scanning of the results shows other-directed and highly other-directed respondents consistently inaccurately responding to a higher degree than the inner-directed and highly inner-directed respondents.

The headline of the ad proved to be the best discriminator between inner- and other-directedness and levels of inaccurate response. When simply divided on this basis, the first and second lines of the headline yielded chi-squares that showed other-directed inaccurately responding more than inner-directed at .02 and .01 levels of confidence, respectively.

When divided into tertiles inaccurate response on the first and second lines of the headline yielded chi-squares at the .01 and .001 levels.

The results obtained on the subhead were conflicting. When divided on the basis of inner-and other-directedness the chi-square for the differing levels of inaccurate response was at the .10 level. But when divided into tertiles the level of inaccurate response for the highly-other directed and highly inner-directed were, for all purposes, equal.

When the total number of inaccurate responses was compared with the total number of responses for the college major groupings listed below, the following percentages resulted:

Inaccurate Response Among College Majors by Percentages

	All elements	Headline & Subhead	Headline	Cartoons & Captions
Social Sci	33	57	60	7
Physical Sci	16	25	31	10
Professional	23	34	46	11
Education	53	53	67	53

The chart shows a greater propensity for social science students and education majors to inaccurately respond.[4]

No valid difference in the levels of inaccurate response could be found for sex and college level (undergraduate or graduate).

Conclusions

It was concluded that other-directed social character types do, in fact, inaccurately respond to a significantly greater extent than do the inner-directed on tests of this nature, thus affirming the hypothesis of this study.

Levels of inaccurate response seem to covary with the extent of a person's inner- or other-directedness.

The fact that this relationship was strongest on the headline has interesting implications from the standpoint of Riesman's theories. If we can assume that next to the photograph in this ad, the headline was the most obvious element to have been seen by the respondent, then the respondent's own prestige was subjected to a great risk by responding that he had not seen the headline. For the highly other-directed respondents this risk seemed too great to be coped with and 81% of them claimed to have seen a headline that was totally nonexistent. Yet, the highly inner-directed group which Riesman claims has "a certain freedom to fail in the eyes of others" had only a 21% rate.

Accordingly, on the smaller items of the ad, cartoon blocks and captions, less was at stake and both other-directed and inner-directed rates of inaccurate response declined.

Inaccurate response levels seem to fluctuate with the relative size of the element.

Inaccurate response levels were also higher among more other-directed college major groupings than the more inner-directed groupings as Riesman had lead us to expect.

This study also lends support to the conclusion of Marder and David that inaccurate response levels are great in tests of this nature. So great, in fact, as to make them essentially meaningless as reflections of past behavior.

The results, in general, confirmed the hypothesis and gave further evidence that Riesman's hypotheses of social character are meaningful variables that when applied to ad recognition tests of this nature can be used to predict relative levels of inaccurate response.

References

[1]Eric Marder and Mort David, "Recognition of Ad Elements: Recall or Projection," Journal of Advertising Research, Vol. 1 (December 1961), pp. 23-25.

[2]Harold H. Kassarjian, "Social Character and Differential Preference for Mass Communication," Journal of Marketing Research, Vol. 2 (May 1965), pp. 146-153.

[3]Waltraud Kassarjian, "A Study of Riesman's Theory of Social Character," Sociometry, Vol. 25 (September 1962) p. 217.

[4]The author made this more particularized category on the pure hunch that high rates of inaccuracy would appear.

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